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large destroyers of weed seeds and noxious insects, some of them 'specializing' on some of the greatest insect pests, as the cucumber beetles, borers and curculios of various kinds, Colorado potato beetles, cotton boll weevil, cankerworm, army worm, and other destructive caterpillars, etc. The conclusion is reached that these birds are many times more beneficial than destructive, and are hence of great economic value.— J. A. A.

**The Work of the Biological Survey.**—The act making appropriation for the Department of Agriculture for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1908, directed the Secretary of Agriculture "to investigate and report to the next session of Congress to what extent, if any, the work now being done by the Bureau of Biological Survey is duplicated by any other Department of the Government, and to what extent the work of this Bureau is of practical value to the agricultural interests of the country." The Secretary's Report<sup>1</sup> forms a document of some forty pages, illustrated with appropriate maps, reviewing in detail the work of the Survey. He says: "I have the honor to report that no part of the work now being done by the Bureau of Biological Survey is duplicated by any other Department of the Government, and that the work of the Survey is of great practical value to the agricultural interests of the country." Following this statement is a concise summary of "the objects, nature, and results of the investigations carried on by the Biological Survey," occupying about three pages, which is in turn followed by a classified, detailed statement of the practical work of the Survey, occupying the rest of the Report.

During the last session of Congress a bitter attack was made upon the Survey, obviously inspired by political animus, which led to a popular uprising throughout the country in its defense, which ultimately overwhelmed its maligners. The demand upon the Secretary of Agriculture for a report to Congress upon the work of the Survey was one of the fortunate results of a seemingly untoward incident; for while the country at large was keenly alive to its economic importance, many of the law-makers of the nation were in blissful ignorance of its rôle in behalf of the public welfare. Now, however, there is no longer excuse for any such ignorance. Readers of 'The Auk,' and naturalists the country over, while well aware that the small sum annually expended in the niggardly maintenance of the Survey was many times repaid through its practical results, have now access to a comprehensive and convenient statement of its varied, far-reaching, and highly beneficial activities. It is impossible, nor is it necessary, to recapitulate here its various lines of work and their economic results, so fully unfolded in this official report, which fittingly concludes with a list of the publications of the Survey, from 1885,

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<sup>1</sup> Report on Work of Biological Survey. By James Wilson, Secretary of Agriculture. Senate Document No. 132, 60th Congress, 1st Session. Read December 21, 1907; referred to the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry and ordered to be printed, with illustrations. 8vo. pp. 39, pll. i-vi (maps).

when the work was begun, to date. These include 'Bulletins' (Nos. 1-31), 'North American Fauna' (Nos. 1-26, excepting No. 6, not yet issued), 'Circulars' (Nos. 1-62), 'Farmers' Bulletins' (10 in number), and reprints of articles from the 'Yearbook' (29 in number).

A more popular review of the work of the Biological Survey has also recently appeared in the 'National Geographic Magazine,'<sup>1</sup> where Mr. H. W. Henshaw attractively presents the results and methods of its various lines of research. Especial reference is made to the relation of birds to agriculture, and the investigation made accurately to determine them; also the losses due to small mammal pests and to wolves; bird reservations and game refuges; protection of game and birds; supervision against the importation of undesirable and dangerous mammals and birds. No one can fail, on reading either of these documents, to realize, at least in some degree, the great economic importance to the entire nation of the work of the Biological Survey.— J. A. A.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

### The Buffel-head Duck.

EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':—

*Dear Sirs:*— In the current descriptions of the colors of the adult male Buffel-head Duck, there is, according to my own examination of specimens, an error as to the color of his belly. Audubon, Chapman, Saunders, Hoffman and Mrs. Bailey all *include this part* with the neck, breast and wing-coverts, simply stating that all these are *white*. Wilson, alone, always so exquisitely accurate in description, says: "...rest of the scapulars, lateral band along the wing, and whole breast, snowy white; belly, vent and tail-coverts *dusky white*" (the italics are mine).

This, as I have said above, agrees with my own examination of a small number of specimens procured in the New York market in winter, except that in my specimens the "dusky white" of the belly does not include the *vent, or adjacent tail-coverts*, both of these tracts being pure white, or very near it. In mine, too, the "dusky white" is too dark to be called any kind of white. It is a delicate real pattern of wood ash color, strongest along the sides and between the legs.

Yours very truly,

ABBOTT H. THAYER.

*Monadnock, N. H.,*  
Jan. 28, 1908.

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<sup>1</sup> The Policemen of the Air. By Henry Wetherbee Henshaw. National Geographic Magazine, Vol. XIX, No. 2, February, 1908, pp. 79-118, with 16 full-page half-tone illustrations and many others in the text.